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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 4318
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY 0572
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 2111
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RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 2246
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/31/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [RU](#) [SR](#) [YI](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: PUTIN-PRODI MEETING FOCUSES ON BILATERAL ISSUES

Classified By: Classified by David D. Pearce, Political Minister Counse
lor, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

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¶1. (C) Italian PM Prodi's January 23 dinner with Russian President Putin focused largely on bilateral trade issues. According to the MFA Russian Desk, Putin will visit Italy in mid-March for a bilateral visit to Rome and the Vatican and then to Bari for an summit focused primarily on trade, telecommunications and energy. During the March summit, the MFA expects several commercial agreements to be signed. Putin and Prodi devoted little time during the meeting to the discussion of international security with the exception of Kosovo. Putin reiterated that Russia will not accept outright Kosovar independence and urged Prodi to avoid any moves that would humiliate Belgrade. Prodi told Putin that Italy would pursue a path that would produce the greatest long-term stability in the region. In a press conference after the meeting, Prodi and Putin praised the excellent relations between the two and noted that they would continue to work to expand the relationship. End Summary.

Dinner Focused Heavily on Trade, Energy

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¶2. (C) According to Michela Carboniero of the MFA Russia Department, the Prodi-Putin dinner in Sochi was a short preparatory meeting in advance of a mid-March bilateral summit between Russia and Italy. Putin will travel to Rome and the Vatican first in order to meet with Italian President Napolitano and the Pope. Immediately afterward, he will attend the summit in southern Italian city of Bari. The summit will focus heavily on bilateral trade and energy. Carboniero stated that during the summit Italy hopes to sign several agreements, including an agreement on energy.

Kosovo: Russians Say No to Full Independence for Kosovo

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¶3. (C) Putin told Prodi that Russia will seek to support Belgrade in the discussion of Kosovo's future status. He stated that any agreement should have the full support of Serbia and Russia would oppose any efforts to grant full independence to Kosovo. He urged Prodi to avoid taking any measures that would humiliate Serbia. Putin noted, however, that Russia has not made any promises to Belgrade about vetoing a possible UNSC resolution on Kosovo. Prodi told Putin that Italy wanted a solution that would provide the

greatest long-term stability for the region.

Putin Takes a Jab at the U.S.

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¶4. (C) During the press conference after the meeting, Prodi praised Russia's relationship with Italy noted that multilateral action is crucial to helping resolve international crises. Putin stated that a unipolar world, the number of international crises have increased, while the ability to contain them has decreased. He added that Russia is again a world power - something the U.S. does not like.

Comment

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¶5. (C) This was the third meeting between Prodi and Putin since the Prodi Government has been in office. Dependence on Russian energy, a close ideological bond between members of the far left parties of the coalition, and a desire move toward a multipolar world are important motivators for Prodi. Italy under Berlusconi had close ties to Russia, but it appears that Prodi wants to keep moving closer.
SPOGLI